



FIRMAMENT
DIGITAL ART FROM OTTAWA

JAMES ACRES

ERIC CHAN

NICHOLA FELDMAN-KISS

ADRIAN GÖLLNER

The City of Ottawa, Artengine and the Ottawa Centre for Research and Innovation are pleased to present *Firmament* – a digital art exhibition featuring James Acres, Eric Chan, nichola feldman-kiss and Adrian Göllner.

Ottawa is a creative city, and recognizes that collaborative thinking and dialogue is powerful. It can lead to many great things. Creative and digital collaborations can touch everything from youth engagement, media arts, education, health, to meaningful innovation.

Innovation can be an elusive dream. The next radical shift always seems just over the horizon. Like much of contemporary technological innovation, the artistic projects in *Firmament* seem intangible. The works each derive their strength from an element that is beyond our physical grasp, but is present nonetheless. Acres engages with the illusion of drawing in space through retro-future anaglyph glasses; Chan's abstract forms are driven by weather which we cannot see; feldman-kiss presents a perfect body scan twisting just outside our realm of perception, and finally Göllner materializes the idea of chance, abstracting our concrete superstitions. The divergent content of the work is connected by an elusive ether in which each of the art works exist - a firmament of future creative expression.

It is very fitting then that this exhibition should accompany a digital media trade mission and in the spirit of innovation we hope that we can spark a dialogue that forges new connections and networks between our cities, artists and creative industries.

James Acres is an Ottawa-based media artist working in interactive media. His work focuses on the creation of programmatic systems that allow viewers to interact and influence the end result. Acres seeks to create interactions that are both familiar and usable, but often present the unexpected. He is currently a professor at Algonquin College where he teaches topics related to interaction design. James is also a member of the Board of Directors for Artengine (www.artengine.ca), an artist-run media arts center.

Filament is an interactive sketchbook. It is an exploration of new methods of interaction for drawing in three-dimensional space. A wireless controller provides the viewer with the ability to draw with gestures, much as if drawing in thin air. Anaglyph 3D glasses worn by the participants help to further the effect of depth.

I am fascinated by projects that require the participation of the viewer in order to succeed. Provide two people with a pencil and paper and two very different results will be presented. Opening as an empty sketchbook that relies on viewers to fill its pages, *Filament* plays on the unpredictable and offers a unique experience from one viewer to the next.

Passer-bys are invited to pick up the controller and contribute their own creations to the installation. The goal is not only to capture the end result, but also the participant's creative process by recording the steps and movements used to create their drawing. When not in use, the saved drawings will replay, line by line, expressing the same timing and gestural motion by which they were originally created.



Eric Sze-Lang Chan is a hybrid artist/designer/technologist working in the multidisciplinary creative industry.

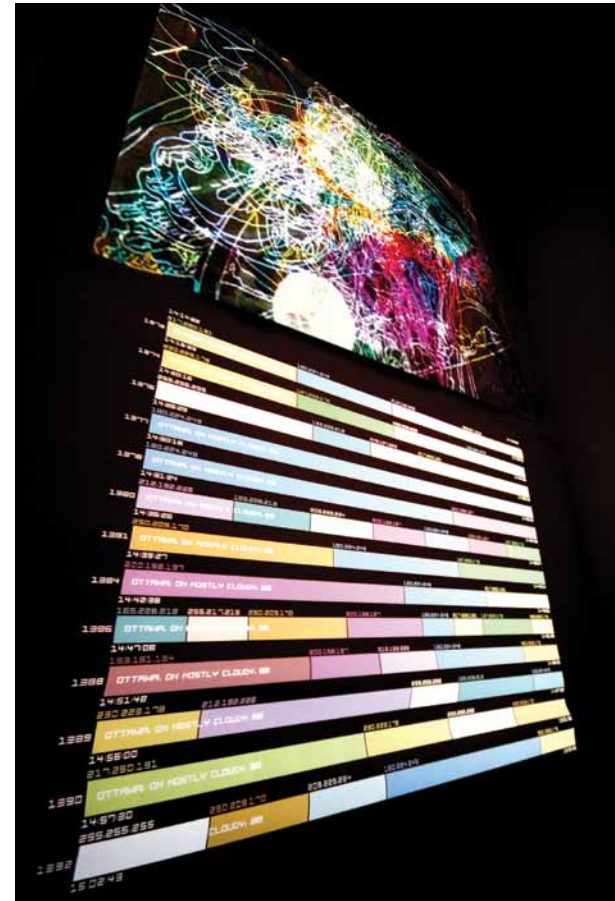
Under the artist name of eepmon, he has worked/consulted on campaigns and projects including Microsoft Xbox 360 (Europe), MINI Cooper (Canada), Dentsu, Yahoo! (Singapore) and Tiger Beer (China). His work has made international headway and recognition in the art, design, and digital spaces.

Awards include: "Best Canadian Student" at FITC 2006; "Excellence Award for Illustration" in the Computer Arts Graduate Showcase '08; and was a recipient of a 2009 Banff Centre artist residency. Commencing in September 2010, Eric will be teaching part-time at Algonquin College. His art has been acquired by the Canada Council's Art Bank.

Chan's work resides at the intersection of painting and computer-mediated art. Chan's process evokes a sensibility akin to action painting of the 1960s in the way that it explores issues related to the body and to performance. The artist integrates computer algorithms into his paintings, illustrating contemporary conceptions of the machine as an extension of the body. His process is shaped by chance and certainty, improvisation and script, affect and effect.

Chan obtains real-time data from Google's weather feed via the Internet. An event-driven computer program is coded with parameters to translate the weather data into visual and audio formats. The incoming weather conditions are grouped into six categories: cloud, fog, clear, rain, snow and rare (including hurricanes and tornados). Each category is assigned a corresponding colour theme and environmental sound selected by the artist. Chan then casts the computer-generated visual output onto the canvas, where moving lines, patterns, sounds and swatches of colour guide his gestural brushstrokes. The resulting brightly coloured canvases feature undulating lines, swirls, and patterns dissolving into figurative forms.

A relationship exists between computer vector graphics, the line, and the artist's brushstrokes. In **Intersections**, the works take form through Chan's dynamic act of following the trajectory of the projected lines. In her discussion on computer art and calligraphy, Laura U. Marks describes the line as performative rather than presentational. Essentially, the line is time-based and dependent upon movement. She states, "the relationship between point and line is performative, in that a line is drawn out from a point in duration: this might be the duration of sculpting wet stucco, of writing, of connecting points of light, or the act of following such lines with one's eyes." Chan's performance paintings are collaborations between the computer and his body; they bridge concept and corporeality.



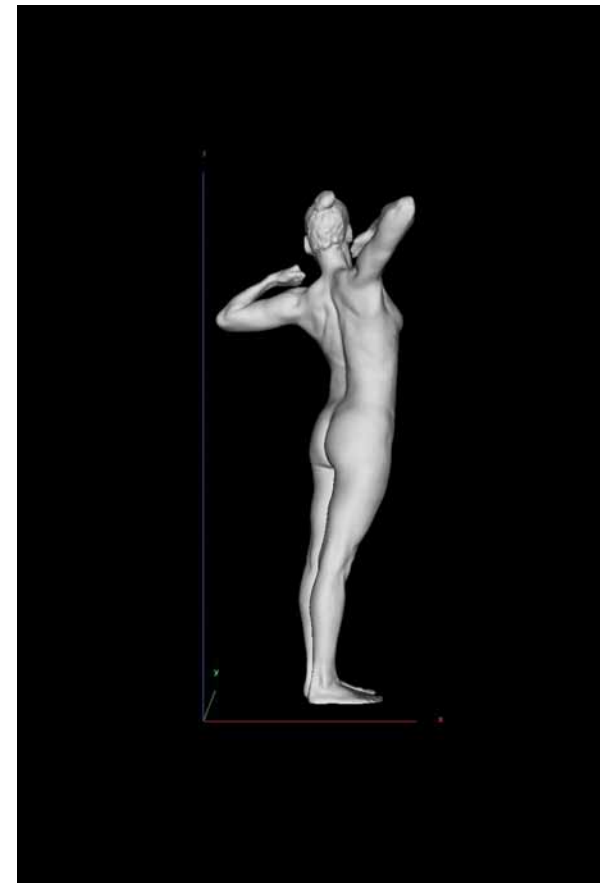
nichola feldman-kiss is an artist researching corporeality, identity and autobiography. The artist implicates self-reflexive narratives in her performative exploration of body, gaze, subjectivity, sociality and consciousness. Her multi-disciplinary installations, performances, and objects are characterized by pristine and minimal elegance subtly and subversively disturbing that which we take for granted, asking us to reconsider basic questions about being individual, collective and embodied.

nichola is currently working on the *camera eye*, an interactive sculpture concerning vision, vigilance and character that make extensive use of 3D design, rapid prototyping and eye tracking technology. *the camera eye*, the subject of the artist's childhood fantasy, is informed by her extensive study of the anatomical, spiritual and economic aspects of vision, dying and death. Among other partners, the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Eye Institute have supported *the camera eye* research and development. feldman-kiss is an independent new media and art science policy advisor, a professor of inter-disciplinary studio practice at the University of Ottawa and a member of the board of Directors for Artengine, www.artengine.ca a center supporting research, creation and presentation of digital art.

the imperceptible movie is a screen-based animation made from 3D laser scan data of the artist's own body created while in residence at the National Research Council (NRC) of Canada's Visual Information Technology Group in Ottawa.

During her tenure with NRC, feldman-kiss studied anthropometry, digitization and data-basing of the human body. Resulting from her work within the NRC, is the mean body database, a collection of over eighty 3D whole body laser scans with a data use license. The artist has used the data sets to create numerous conceptual works as well as data and materials experiments with new and hybrid processes that reference the figure in sculpture, photography, print and book works.

the imperceptible movie shows a still body rotating 360° in a 28 minute loop. The near imperceptible movement creates a video still that refreshes itself every second. The static body is in perpetual transition. It is only when the viewer looks away, then returns to the image, that time reveals new details of the body.

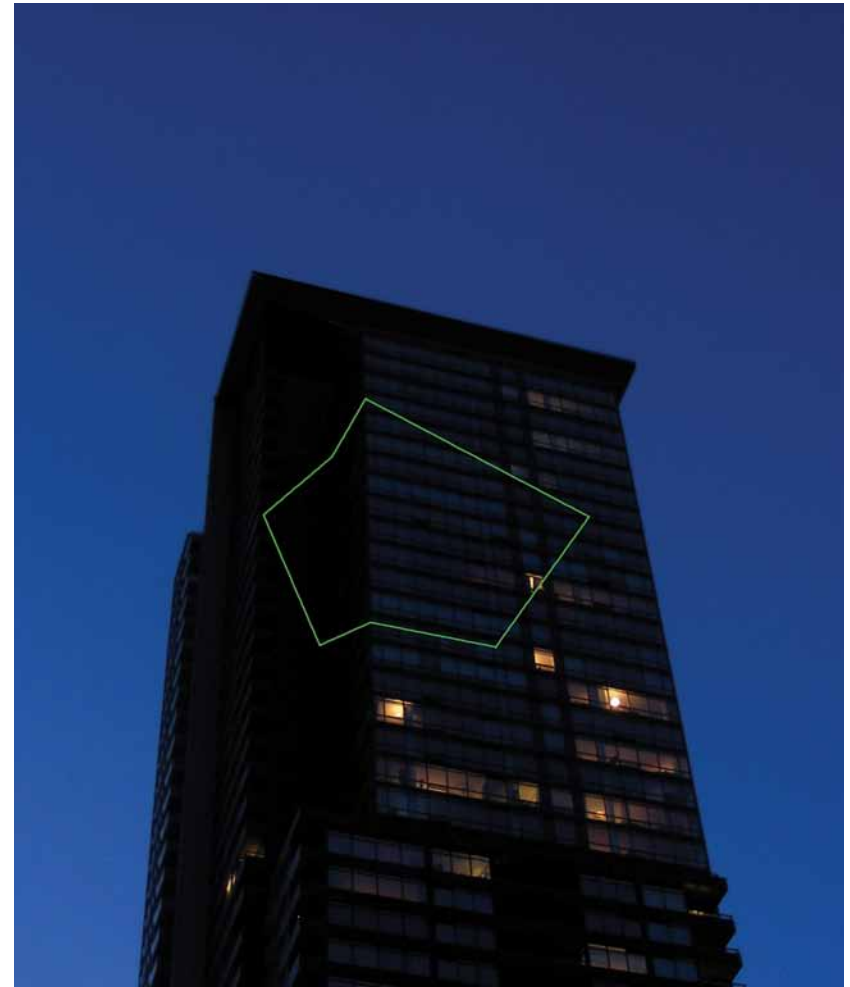


Adrian Göllner has been described as a site-specific satirist. In a chameleon-like adaptation to the environments in which he exhibits, Göllner freely combines graphing techniques and references to Modernism in artworks that critique consumer culture. While continuing to exhibit, he has been awarded fifteen public art commissions, including one for the Canadian Embassy in Berlin and one for the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic Games.

The Shape of Luck series began during a residency in Trinidad in 2007. As a way of taking part in the lotto fever that had overtaken the island, I plotted each week's six-figure draw on a radar graph and then transferred the resulting shapes to my studio wall. Similarities amongst the shapes and my pseudo-scientific method led to serious speculation as to whether the winning number could be predicted. In effect, the wall became a sounding board for people's deeply-seated beliefs about luck.

Artengine has adapted the concept into an online artwork where a viewer can contribute a lottery number, see the resulting shape and then watch it morph into a continuous sequence of other lottery-derived shapes. For *Firmament*, the piece has been further refined for projection in gallery spaces.

Lotteries are a compelling economic and societal indicator. In the 1990s, many European nations introduced six-figure national lotteries, which allow the jackpot to grow, and have resulted in a number of lottery crazes in Europe. Interestingly, with the recent financial crisis, many Europeans have turned to the faint prospect of security offered by lotteries and they are now more popular than ever. Within the current climate, *The Shape of Luck* becomes a projection of the larger society's hopes and, I suppose, fears.



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